1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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ETHNOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OF THE MISKITO AND SUMU INDIANS OF HONDURAS AND NICARAGUA

By Eduard Conzemius

INTRODUCTION

131 The Miskito and Sumu inhabit the Atlantic side of Honduras and Nicaragua, from Rio Tinto or Black River (lat. 15° 50′ N.) to Rio Punta Gorda (lat. 11° 30′ N.). While the Miskito are found chiefly along the coast the Sumu are an inland tribe and extend westward within a short distance from the settlements of the Spanish-speaking population.

Together these two tribes occupy the larger part of the vast region generally known by the name of Mosquito Coast. This territory reaches from Cabo Honduras, near Trujillo, to Rio San Juan, at the Costa Rica boundary; that is, from the eleventh to the sixteenth degree north, an extension of about 550 miles by sea. From Cabo Honduras the coast runs at first in an easterly direction, then southeast as far as Cabo Gracias a Dios, whence it extends nearly due south.

103 Columbus, who discovered the country in 1502, gave the name *Costa de Orejas* "Coast of the Ears" to that part situated to the west of Cabo Gracias a Dios. The southern district of the Mosquito Coast became known in those days as *Cariay* or *Cariari*, *Veragua* or *Beragua*, *Castilla del Oro* "Golden Castile." These names were superseded by the Spanish-Mexican terms *Taguzgalpa* and *Tologalpa*, which stuck practically throughout the colonial period.

The name "Mosquito Coast" (Mosquito Territory or Mosquito Shore), employed by the English, has been taken from that of the principal Indian tribe, the Miskito, erroneously called Mosquito; the Spaniards translated it into *Mosquitia* and *Costa de Mosquitos* (*Costa Mosquita*). Many believe that this name has arisen from the numerous mosquitoes to be found in the country, while others think that the small islands off the coast, "which lie as thick as mosquitoes," may have caused the appellation.

193 Orography.—The shore of the Mosquito Coast is partly alluvial and partly coralline; to the south of Cabo Gracias a Dios the land is gaining on the sea, but to the north of that cape the reverse appears to be the case.

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721 selves consider King Buppan's Bluff (Peñasco de Buppan, Frontón de Guapan), a promontory situated about 22 miles east of Escudo de Veragua Island, as the southernmost point visited by their ancestors.

721 Thus the Miskito acquired an ascendancy over practically the entire Atlantic seaboard from Cabo Honduras (near Trujillo in Honduras) 197 to Chiriqui Lagoon (Panama). Their language is understood by many Indians from the neighboring tribes (Sumu, Rama, and Paya), and still plays the rôle of a *lingua franca* in certain parts of the Mosquito Coast. The part played by the Miskito in Central America in former days is similar to that of the Carib tribes of South America and the Antilles, but in the latter region the rôle of the English was taken by the Dutch.

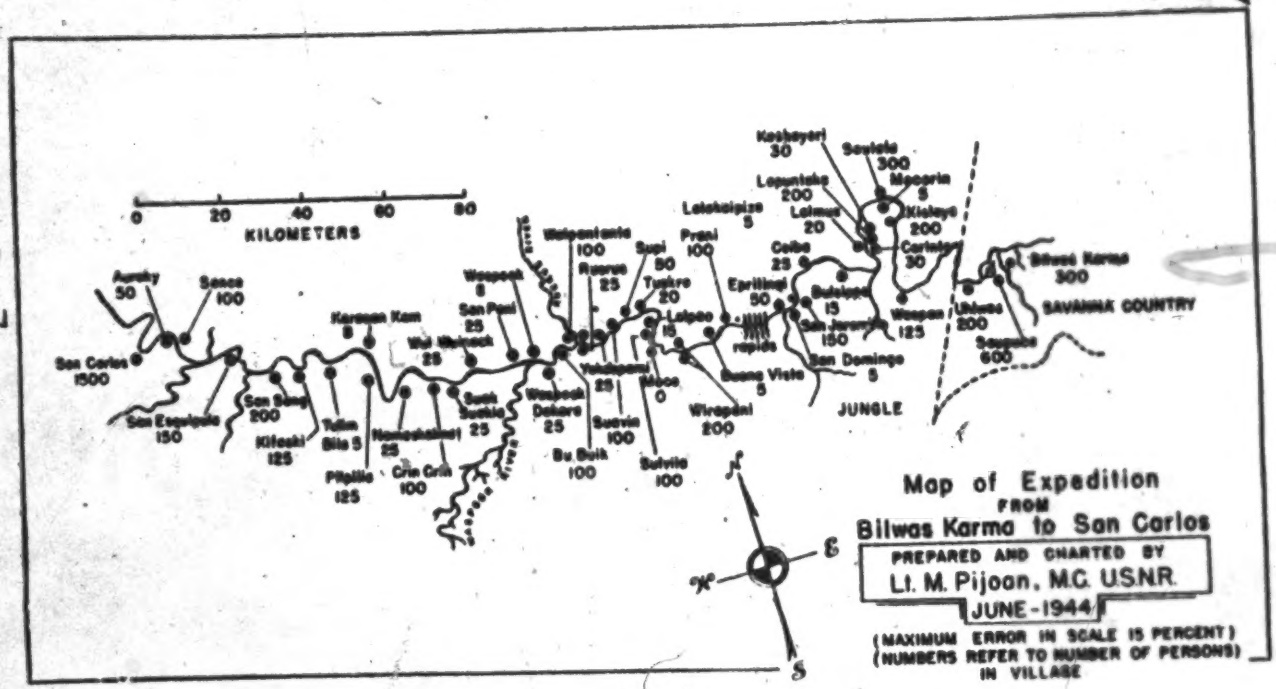
721 The place names belonging to the Miskito language, which may be met with all along the Atlantic shore of Costa Rica and Panama as ● 103 far south as King Buppan's Bluff, owe their origin to the above-mentioned marauding expeditions (Conzemius, a: 300-306). Still permanent settlements were not made by the Miskito on that vast region, the southern limit of their habitat being formed by Pearl Lagoon, where they established themselves during the latter part of the eighteenth century. About that same period they also spread up some of the larger rivers, as the Patuca, Guagua (Wawa), Cucallaya, Prinsapolca, Rio Grande, and especially Rio Coco; on the last-named stream they may be found as far up as Bocay, that is, about 300 miles from the sea by the circuitous course of the river.

727 TREATMENT OF PRISONERS.—As stated before, the Miskito began their slave-hunting expeditions into the territory of their neighbors 567 toward the end of the seventeenth century. The captive women and children were either kept as slaves (M.: *alba* [1]; S.: *warau*) or they were sold to the Jamaican traders who arrived occasionally on the coast. The boys, when arrived at the age of puberty, were allowed to take a Miskito wife, and the children of such unions grew up as free members of the tribe.

721 Slave-hunting expeditions in seagoing canoes were particularly directed to the Talamanca region (southeastern Costa Rica), where many Tiribi (Terbi) Indians were reduced to slavery. The same fate met the aborigines living around Chiriqui Lagoon (M. W.: 302; Peralta, a: 20, 93, 95; Peláez: II, 156; Young: 35; Conzemius, a: 300–301). Many references to the Miskito slavers may also be

[1] This word has evidently some connection with *albawina*, by which name the Miskito called the Sumu formerly, or perhaps all their Indian enemies in general. The Black Carib or Garif apply to the Miskito the name *idadu*, which word likewise had originally the meaning of "slave." (Compare *ilada* "slave" in Father Gumilla's work.)

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3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
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